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ABSTRACT

The author proposes a method of examining and organizing the principles relating to the conditions of institutional change. Those conditions of change involve principles which relate to three elements--people, places, and things. Within these categories, principles may be enumerated which operate to facilitate or restrain change or innovation within educational institutions. The relationship of people to institutional change is summarized with two fundamental principles: (1) the translation of a theoretical curriculum into program reality is always a matter of personal involvement; (2) the changes most often realized are those clearly perceived by people. Just as change involves people, change also occurs at given places, at given times. As an institution orients change to goals, several principles seem to be appropriate. These include: (1) any institution can assimilate only so much change in a given period of time; (2) change requires time, but not in proportion to the extent of change. In order to complete this sequence of change which relates people to things, the author places a premium on communication with those who are responsible for accomplishing program objectives. When change actually occurs, it is a result of people who have a commitment, working hard in programs to which they have a dedication, doing things which make a difference. (Author/PC)

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THE CONDITIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE[1]

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In approaching the topic of institutional change, there is a great temptation to be negative. Given the difficulties which have been so much a part of instituting change in educational settings within recent history, it is simply a matter of the negative aspects being more predominant. Each of us could easily make a list under a general heading of "Barriers to Change" or "Constraints to Innovation". The objective of being more positive, or at least balanced, in dealing with institutional change will be attempted.

It has occurred to me that one should be able to develop a taxonomy of change in much the same way as Bloom has developed the taxonomy of educational objectives. In fact, the similarity of the reasons given by Bloom for using a taxonomy approach apply quite well to the objectives of change. Taxonomies are particularly helpful in that they permit classification into categories. In addition, they facilitate communication and understanding, provide a basis for defining the range of goals or outcomes, aid in the specification of objectives in order that planning and evaluation may occur, and finally, serve to help one gain a perspective which is important in the analysis of a situation and the application of remedial measures.

While all of these things could be found within a taxonomy of change, and there may well be need for such an approach; bringing change and innovation into such a framework is likely to be a greater task than can be coped with at the moment. For now, there is at least an opportunity to mention some principles which relate to the conditions of change. These are not as complete as a taxonomy of change would be, nor are they likely to be as profound as the well publicized principles with which you are familiar. They are certain to be far less inclusive than the Peter Principle which proclaims that "everyone rises to his level of incompetence", or that part of Parkinson's Law which establishes the fact that "work expands to fill available time", or even the historic and basic truism that "if anything can go wrong - it will". In fact, statements about change and innovation may appear more like platitudes than principles. It is proposed, however, that they are more than slogans, yet hopefully less than epitaphs.

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1 Outline of presentation to the University of New Mexico, College of Education faculty-student retreat, March, 1974.

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CG 009 373

An arrangement of the principles of change should follow a logical classification system. Classifications, like taxonomies, are helpful only if they are useful and understandable to others, as well as conveying a reasonable approach to the area of concern. As such, it is suggested that the conditions of change involve principles which relate to three elements: people, places, and things. Within these categories, principles may be enumerated which operate to facilitate or restrain change or innovation within educational institutions.

People as a Condition of Change

Since change rarely occurs without the direct involvement of individuals, principles of change must have concern for the major people elements, which in an institution can be broadly summarized as administration, faculty, and students.

Criteria for Change - Administration:

The administration is charged with educational leadership.
The administration bears the final responsibility for change and innovation.
The administration must exhibit a consistant philosophy of education.
The administration must keep the total mission of the institution in focus.
The administration must marshall the resources to achieve change.
The administration must establish parameters for programs.

Criteria for Change - Faculty:

The faculty is convinced that change can take place.
The faculty is agreed that change is worthwhile.
The faculty functions through representative channels.
The faculty is willing to cooperate in reaching common goals.
The faculty is truly responsible for the consequences of their decisions.

Criteria for Change - Students:

The student is motivated.

The student acquires skills and knowledge.

The student gains experience and practice.

The student develops a sense of satisfaction and purpose.

The student has confidence in self and performance.

It is obvious that if institutional change is to occur, it will be evidenced in situations where administrative leadership is strong, faculty commitment is intense, and there are behaviorial changes in students. While the administration is ultimately responsible for institutional change, individual leadership can be exercised by anyone willing to assume the appropriate role. The relationship of people to institutional change might be summarized with two fundamental principles: (1) the translation of a theoretical curriculum into program reality is always a matter of personal involvement, and (2) the changes most often realized are those clearly perceived by, if not painfully apparent, to people.

Places as a Condition of Change

Change does not occur in a vacuum, nor does innovation exist in an amorphous mass devoid of physical limitation. Just as change involves people, change also occurs at given places, at given times. Institutions are quick to conclude that goals and objectives of other institutions cannot be adopted without consideration for institutional needs and unique characteristics. Institutions, and people responsible for programs within institutions, however, may not be equally critical of innovations which they see as productive parts of other programs. One frequently observes institutions who have adopted innovations without due consideration for either institutional or program relevance. Individuals responsible for programs must keep in mind that change is not, in itself, a criteria of program or institutional quality. Change must always be functionally related to institutional and program goals. Specific consideration for the institutional objectives and the classes of goals can help to keep this balance in

perspective. Goals can be thought of in five major categories:

1. Output Goals - Goals which specify student competencies, describe changing student behavior, and develop specific professional skills.
2. Adaptation Goals - Goals which have the specific purpose of relating programs to the institutional, situational, and professional environment in which it is located.
3. Management Goals - Goals which serve to demonstrate program adaptability and ability to handle conflicts while moving toward established priorities.
4. Motivational Goals - Goals aimed at maintaining the satisfaction and loyalty of the university community, both in relation to program objectives and institutional commitment.
5. Positional Goals - Goals which enhance the position of the university as compared to other universities, and the statue of the program as compared to other programs.

As an institution orients change to goals, several principles would seem to be appropriate. These include: (1) any institution can only assimilate so much change in a given period of time, and (2) change requires time, but not in proportion to the extent of change. In a less positive vein, one must face the reality that : (1) change is not likely to occur within inadequate facilities, and (2) change can occur anywhere - it just seems that it is usually happening at other places.

Things as a Condition of Change

Within the context of institutional change, there is an obvious connection between people and programs. It is quite likely that the sequence of change is merely one of direct relationships of people to things which are accomplished. Another way of putting it, would be that as a result of their characteristics, people do things which contribute to and result in institutional change. Sequentially, this is a matter of:

PEOPLE DEMONSTRATE ATTRIBUTES OF:

1. Information
2. Knowledge
3. Understanding
4. Acceptance
5. Commitment ..... which permits them to

ACCOMPLISH THESE THINGS:

1. Assess needs
2. Set priorities
3. Develop objectives
4. Define activities
5. Evaluate achievement

In order to complete this sequence of change which relates people to things, a premium must be placed on communication with those who are responsible for accomplishing the things which the program has set out to achieve. In addition, there will be essential requirements of enthusiasm and loyalty, which respond best to rewards and incentives. Ways must be found to reinforce, continually, the kinds of behavior which will keep people at work doing the things which will move the program toward the objectives which have been agreed upon. An adequate personal and professional reward system for those who participate in institutional change is not easily accomplished. An array of appropriate incentives, which includes monetary ones, must be a part of planning for program innovation. Eventually, one must face the fact that change doesn't have to cost money, but it will.

Summary - By Way of Basic Questions

In summary, the essential elements of institutional change which relate to people, places, and things may also be posed as basic questions. There are "who"-type questions which relate to people, "where"-type questions which relate to places, and "what"-type questions which relate to things.

In the final analysis, one must ask certain questions concerning people. The first of these questions, and by far the most fundamental one, is: "Who decides who decides?" It is acutely evident that it is not so important who makes the decision as who has the power to appoint decision makers. The second question is: "Who does what to whom?" Allocation of responsibility as well as the division of labor is an essential organizational ingredient, which is a prerequisite to institutional change. The third question is: "Who judges the judge?" The process of evaluation from day-to-day progress reports to the ultimate verdict of program continuation is made at a variety of levels with the final resolution occurring at the point where those who have made such evaluations are themselves, evaluated.

The essential questions concerning places begin with: "Where in the world are you?" Institutional location, mission, and posture occurs within a social-economic-political environment, and concern for institutional change must take these factors into account. A second question is: "Where do we pitch the tent?" Change can be as broad-based as an entire institution, but it is more likely to occur at a lower level of the organizational structure; so where and under what conditions innovation is to be found becomes a matter of considerable importance. We also must always ask: "Where have all the flowers gone?" Programs exist in institutions for purposes of the preparation of professional people, and the ultimate distribution and contribution of those who have participated in programs becomes a most conclusive element in evaluating program innovation.

Finally, there are questions which relate to things which are a part of program change. One of the first, is the simple question of: "What's in a name?" The matter of terminology for both communication and acceptance, both within the institution and in the larger community, can avoid or create problems relating to innovative programs. Second, one must respond to the question: "What do you want me to do?" The things which people must do in achieving institutional change need to be spelled out in terms of specific roles, responsibilities, and activities which are both appropriate and meaningful, for individual contributions to occur. Finally, there will be the question: "What's in it for me?" In one way or another, all individuals involved in institutional change will need to identify the rewards and incentives which will accrue to them as a result of participation in and contribution to creating positive conditions for institutional change.

If there is a fundamental principle regarding institutional change, it might be: The difference between a theoretical curriculum and an inoperative program is often zero. An institution which can understand the need for change, organize the personal and institutional resources to move toward change, and apply evaluative techniques which will allow changes to be smoothly coordinated with ongoing programs and institutional objectives, is making innovation an intregal part of the institution. By far, most innovative programs are to be found in articles in professional journals, reports to accrediting associations, and voluminous minutes of committee meetings established to consider needs for change. When change really occurs, it is a result of people who have a commitment, working hard in programs to which they have a dedication, doing things which make a difference.